

THE
EDINBURGH JOURNAL
OF
NATURAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL SCIENCE.

APRIL, 1831.

ORIGINAL ARTICLES.

ART. I.—*Descriptions of New or Little Known Species of Birds.* By SIR W. JARDINE, Bart. F.R.S.E. F.L.S. M.W.S. F.Z.S. &c.

THE following descriptions have been written with the view of making known as early as possible those species of birds in my own collection, which appear to be undescribed, or to possess something remarkable in their external appearance and anatomical structure. They will be continued occasionally, as arrivals from abroad, or other circumstances, may put me in possession of new or interesting materials.

No. 1.—*Lanius melanoleucus*, JARD. Pied Shrike.

L. niger, scapularibus, uropigio, hypochondriis fasciaque remigum albis; plumis capitis, colli jugulique elongatis, acuminatis; cauda longissima.

Three specimens of this elegant and curiously formed shrike were some time since received from our valued South African correspondent, Dr Smith. The accompanying notes mention that "they were killed in the vicinity of the Orange River, and that nothing was known of their history." From the latter circumstance we may conclude that they are of considerable rarity; and, though anxiously asked for, no specimens have been included among the numerous species we have since received from that country.

In the true and typical shrikes, taking *Lanius excubitor* of Europe, and the African *L. collaris*, as examples, we have a somewhat robust form; the bill strong, considerably hooked, and possessing a prominent notch,—the latter being in strict

analogy with the more noble falcons; wings rather powerful, yet shewing, by the form and gradation of the quills, that they are not adapted for either very rapid or lengthened flight; the tail lengthened, regularly graduated, and generally containing twelve feathers, of which the centre two are longest. In the species now before me, all these characters are very strongly portrayed; the shrike-like form is developed to its utmost extent, and, although I might be inclined to use this species as the type of a new form among the *Laniadæ*, were more assimilating species known, I do not feel justified in separating it as an individual. That which most nearly resembles it is the *Lanius corvinus*; but in this the strength of the bill is very inferior. It also, at first sight, strongly reminded me of the *Lanius Leverianus*, (*Bethylus*, Cuv.) in the lengthened tail, and the pied plumage, with the sharp and lengthened form of the feathers on the head and neck, a peculiarity not met with in the true *Lanius*, where the whole plumage is rather soft and downy. At a little distance, and when on the wing, it much resembles our common magpie, which the manner of perching, and the motion of the tail, among the shrikes, may tend to increase. As minute a description as possible of this curious bird is subjoined, and I would anxiously recommend the investigation of its habits to the ornithological members of the South African Institution.

The entire length of the skin is eighteen inches and a half, of which the tail measures twelve inches; the bill is strong, and bending towards the tip, with the notch very prominent; the head, neck, back, under parts, and tail, rich glossy black; the feathers on the head, neck, throat, and upper part of the breast, rather lengthened, of a pointed or hackled form, like those of the common starling; on the upper parts, they are glossed with green, on the throat, and fore part of the breast, with a coppery or purplish lustre; the rump is grayish white, which extends also upon the sides, and under the wings, where one half of some of the webs are black, giving a streaked or dashed appearance of black and white; the feathers on the sides are more than usually elongated and puffy; the scapulars are pure white, and join the gray feathers of the rump when the wings are closed, forming, as it were, a crescent-shaped band across the body; the secondaries are black with white tips; the quills are also black, the tips with a white spot, commencing upon the third, and increasing in size, with the progression of the quills; at the base, they are crossed with a white bar of about an inch and a half in length, which extends over both webs, except in the first, where it is confined to the inner one. The tail consists of twelve feathers; the ten first gradually progressing in length, at the rate of about one inch and a quarter; the eleventh and twelfth, or outer ones, exceed the rest by three inches and a half; the four longest feathers are hollow underneath, and, when the tail is closed, lie entirely over each other, covering the rest,

and making the tail appear very long and slender. The feet and legs are remarkably strong. One of the specimens sent is, fortunately, a young bird, evidently in the state of first moult, or about four or five months old. In this the general colour is of a brownish tinge, the feathers tipped with a paler margin; those of the head and neck of the usual form, not pointed and elongated as in the adults; the white parts of the plumage in the adult, are here of a dull reddish brown; the bill has not attained its full bend, and the very strong notch is not fully developed.

No. 2.—*Gracaulus tenuirostris*, JARD. Slender-billed Gracaulus.

G. griseus, loris tectricibusque narium nigris; remigibus, secundariis, scapularibus nigris etiamsi, marginibus, pallidè griseis; cauda subfurcata; reetricibus duobus mediis griseis, apicibus nigro maculatis, reliquis nigris griseo terminatis, griseo exteriorum tertio longitudinis equanti.

I have applied the above specific title to this bird at the suggestion of Mr Swainson, to whom it was submitted for examination as an undescribed species. The name is characteristic of the slender and more than usually attenuated bill, being actually as high as it is broad, in which it differs from its congeners, though, in other respects, there is a perfect resemblance.

The specimen in my possession was received some time since from New Holland. The exact length is ten inches; that of the bill, to the extremity of the rictus, one inch and an eighth. The space between the eye and nostril is clothed with thick and strong bristly feathers of a deep black colour, which lie over and cover the nostril more than in the typical species. The entire plumage of the body is a rich bluish gray, of a duller shade on the under parts, and on the chin and cheeks, approaching to blackish gray, forming an indistinct band of that colour below the eyes. The quills, secondaries, and scapulars, are black,—the latter with broad, the former (excepting the first and second) with narrow, clear, grayish margins. The tail contains twelve feathers,—the two centre ones of the same colour with the body, and having the shafts, as well as a round spot at the ends, surrounded by a narrow margin of grayish black; the next four feathers become gradually longer, and give the form of a slight fork; they are black, with a narrow margin of gray at the tips; the last, on each side, are nearly half an inch shorter than the longest, are also black, but have a large oblong patch of gray at the ends. The stiff feathers on the rump of this individual are remarkably abundant, forming a complete pad, and possess an equal pointedness and rigidity with the African species. They are in this respect at variance with M. Temminck's description of the genus in the letter-press to his *Planches coloriées*, where he remarks, that the species from Asia, New Holland, and the islands in the South Pacific, are similar in plumage to

those of Africa, except in the feathers on the rump, which, though thick and downy, want the stiff and sharp points. I may add, that in all the species in my possession, from both Asia and New Holland, there appears little difference in the construction of these feathers, the smallest and weakest even possessing feathers of equal strength and rigidity, and with the same sharpened points, as those of Africa.

No. 3.—*Ægithalus Smithii*, JARD. Dr Smith's Penduline.*

Æ. supra olivaceus, subtus flavescens, fascia frontali obscura, genis juguloque albis.

Ægithalus was some years since proposed by Mr Vigors to characterize the form exhibited by the penduline titmouse—*Parus pendulinus* of authors; at this time the only individual known to exist, inhabiting the south of France and Italy, Poland and Russia, and, according to Vieillot, Siberia. I am now indebted to Dr Smith for a second species from Southern Africa, and trust that he will accept the above testimony of our regard in the dedication of the species to its discoverer.

The Pendulines differ from the true Titmice chiefly in the form of the bill, which is slender, nearly straight, runs to a sharp point at the tip, and in general form resembles considerably that of the genus *Carduelis*, to the members of which group, particularly the siskins, it appears somewhat allied by its manners; and I question much if its future station will be found among the *Pipridæ*, where Mr Vigors now places it. We are ignorant of the habits of our present species,—that of Europe frequents marshy places, building a suspended nest, in which it resembles the bearded titmouse, (*P. biarmicus*,) a species which also deviates very considerably from the true *parian* type.

The length of this species is about three inches and a half; the bill, bluish black; upper parts of the plumage, deep brownish oil green; the feathers on the forehead are black, with narrow white tips, and form a dark narrow frontal band; the wings are light brown, the feathers with pale edges; the tail is of the same colour, but some of the feathers are wanting. The form, which appears to have been more rounded than in the type of the genus, cannot be exactly ascertained, and the texture is less rigid; the cheeks and throat are white; the breast, belly, and vent, rich honey yellow; the feet and legs are blackish gray.

References to Plate V. :—

Fig. 1. *Ægithalus Smithii*.

2. *a*, bill of the *Parus*, seen from above.

b, the same seen in profile.

3. *a*, bill of the *Ægithalus*, from above.

b, the same in profile.

(To be continued.)

* See Plate 5.